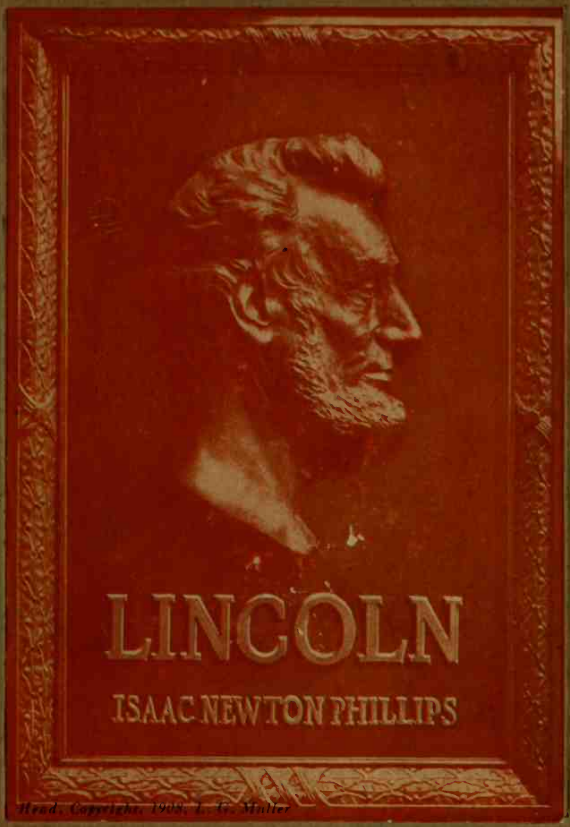

Head. Copyright, 1909, L. C. Moller

48

LINCOLN

LINCOLN

BY

ISAAC NEWTON PHILLIPS

REPORTER OF DECISIONS OF
THE ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT

CHICAGO
A. C. McCLURG & CO.
1910

COPYRIGHT, 1901, BY ISAAC N. PHILLIPS

COPYRIGHT, 1910
A. C. McCLURG & CO.
PUBLISHED FEB. 12, 1910

PUBLISHERS' PRESS
CHICAGO

"Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it."

—Lincoln's Speech at Cooper Institute, New York.

EXPLANATORY

IT is proper, I think, to say to the reader that what is here printed is, with slight corrections and enlargements, identical with an address which I prepared ten years or more ago. The address was delivered before several Illinois audiences—among others, before the faculty and students of the University of Illinois at Urbana. The language used is, therefore, less impersonal than would be proper in a monograph written for publication. I have, however, thought best not to change the form of its presentation, but let it go into print substantially as delivered.

I. N. P.

BLOOMINGTON, ILL.,
January 15, 1910.

LINCOLN

WHEN Abraham Lincoln, after having been named for President, was questioned by a campaign biographer as to his early life, he very pathetically said the whole story might be told in a single line of Gray's "Elegy,"—

"The short and simple annals of the poor."

All the world has now learned that the man who spoke thus modestly of himself was born in the State of Kentucky on the twelfth day of February, 1809. His cradle, if he ever had one, stood upon the dirt floor of a rude log hut; above it was a clap-board roof; about it was that kind of superstition which an iso-

lated people, full of rude elemental force, is apt to manifest, and that kind of poverty which, in a new and free country, casts no shadow of degradation, for it is not the absence of goods but the invidious and blighting contrast of conditions which constitutes real poverty. This boy, too, was surrounded by people who were profoundly ignorant of the world and of the ways of men, and almost as profoundly ignorant of all bookish learning. It is certain that the humblest child in the whole country might now, within the limits of a single year, have the benefit of a far better schooling than was accessible to Lincoln in the time covering all the years of his minority. His surroundings

from birth to manhood remained practically unchanged, and, although his roving father made in that time something more than the number of removes which Poor Richard deemed "equal to one fire," there is no evidence that in the first twenty-one years of his life Abraham Lincoln met with any personal example, or fell under any social influence, which would ordinarily be expected to quicken his mind, arouse his hope, or inspire his ambition.

THE rise of one of the greatest statesmen of history from an environment apparently so luckless, naturally awakens intense interest and even enthusiasm. But

the phenomenon is less wonderful than it seems. Had Lincoln arisen from out the slums of a great city, or even from the social opulence and pampered ease of a palace at Newport, to the intellectual and moral plane where the assassin's bullet found him, the case would be more truly wonderful than it is. Though of obscure parentage, Abraham Lincoln was, in breeding, no mongrel. In spite of the industrious muck-rakes of shameless so-called biographers, it is now known that, both through his father and his mother, this boy received rich strains of honest English blood—blood which had been strengthened and sweetened on its course through the veins of generations of

sturdy American pioneers. He lived with Nature and learned of her. He toiled, but his toil was never hopeless and degrading. His feet were upon the earth, but the stars, shining in perennial beauty, were ever above him to inspire contemplation. He heard the song of the thrush and the carol of the lark. He watched the sun in its course. He knew the dim paths of the forest, and his soul was awed by the power of the storm. Out from the heart of Nature's solitudes he brought all the elements of high success: namely, a good heart, a clear head, and a strong body; and these factors, under the stimulating influence of free institutions, at length wrought in the rude back-

woodsman a wonderful personal transfiguration, the successive stages of which my plan does not permit me to trace.

At the day of his death Lincoln's reputation had already filled the world, and the intense popular affection for his memory, which still constantly grows, although its subject has been for nearly half a century in his tomb, may be regarded as the sure sign of one of those transcendent fames such as popular favor confers scarcely once in a century.

AS a politician Abraham Lincoln was in breadth and sincerity the superior, and in shrewdness and success the full equal, of

Thomas Jefferson; yet he was much more than a politician. No man of his age wrote more effective English than he; yet it is not as a rhetorician that Americans revere him. His keenness of humor and aptness of anecdote were never surpassed by any public man; yet history sternly refuses to regard Abraham Lincoln as a jester. He was a patriot, high and true; but patriotism does not distinguish him, for in his day many others were also patriots, giving even life to the cause. He was a statesman of prodigious breadth and grasp —fearless, imperturbable, self-reliant—and when he judged principle to be at stake, absolutely immovable; yet even the high term

"statesman" does not express quite the full measure of Lincoln, or of Lincoln's fame. To all these elements he united a personality the most striking, the most singular, and the most original which is met with in history, and beneath it all lay the unfathomable mystery of a human soul. In the depths of that rugged and pathetic face were the signs of a spirit that in its highest moments communed with itself and walked alone,—

"His soul was like a star, and dwelt apart."

PUBLIC life has its illusions and fame has its counterfeits. The relative importance of contemporary historic characters, like the relative height and size of adjacent

mountains, is not fully known until the whole group is seen from a distance. The vain and noisy little man of each period "struts and frets his hour upon the stage" with such a deal of pomposity and show, that he appears to his undiscriminating contemporaries quite as important as the real makers of history. Like the "mother frog" in the fable, he tries with breath alone to puff himself up to a colossal stature, and not unfrequently, like the frog, collapses in the process.

True greatness is the consecration of either great talents or great character to the service of mankind. When we read the story of a truly great life we learn of

high purposes pursued by effective methods; we learn of a lofty devotion to truth, of supreme faith in the right, of heroic self-sacrifice; in short, we learn of a supreme struggle of genius in the service of mankind. Then, too, a great cause is necessary to a great public career. Mere feats of intellectual agility send no man's name to the Pantheon. There may, for aught I know, be "mute, inglorious Miltons" in this world, but so long as they are mute they are inefficient. During several years Lincoln filled the public eye. He had a cause, and directly in proportion to the greatness of that cause was his career great. That cause measures Lincoln's public career, but it does

not completely measure Lincoln. After the voluminous biographies have all been read; after the garrulous "old settler," who never so much as suspected the greatness of the man in his lifetime, has related his apochryphal "recollections," and told his mythical anecdotes—always exaggerating his own familiar relations with Lincoln—we feel that there is a Lincoln still unrevealed who is now beginning to fade away. It is this Lincoln whom I shall endeavor to make known in this brief study. I shall speak of Lincoln in his great character as a statesman, and not as a gawk, a buffoon, or a yarn-spinner.

IT is necessary, however, that in an appreciative study of Lincoln we take a comprehensive view of his work. We must note that which had preceded him as well as that which immediately surrounded him. I must ask you to bear with me, therefore, while I go back a little to find the historic background of our picture.

There was in the last century a "critical period" of American history, which Mr. Fiske places between the surrender of Cornwallis and the adoption of the Federal Constitution. This period was "critical" for the reason that in that time it was painfully uncertain whether a permanent union could ever be formed of the American

States. The upheaval of the Revolution had unsettled the conservative force of the American mind, and more follies than would have re-filled Pandora's box a hundred times had broken out in all the American colonies—follies which in their consequences threatened to become even worse than "taxation without representation."

Revolutions are not often well-adapted to the training of statesmen. A very good revolutionary patriot may be only a destructionist, and destructionists are always plenty and cheap. The hand that wrote the Declaration of Independence was not the hand to frame the Federal Constitution. Samuel Adams knew far better how to

knock down King George than how to set up George Washington, first President of a great nation. Patrick Henry could shout in a tempest of eloquence, "Give me liberty or give me death!" but he was scarcely less eloquent in resisting the formation of the Federal Union; while James Monroe, the reputed author of the "Monroe Doctrine," was very sure the adoption of the Federal Constitution would endanger, if not entirely destroy, the people's liberties.

In this critical period two conflicting theories of government contended for mastery in the American colonies. One side, led by Washington, Hamilton, Franklin, Madison, Jay, Marshall, and their

co-workers, realized the supreme importance of a strong central authority—a firm union of the States under one stable government. With the true national instinct they appealed earnestly to the patriotism and good sense of their fellow-citizens. By bitter experience they knew the evils of a many-headed confederacy of weak and discordant States, which, if not fused together, they knew would waste all their energies in jealous bickerings with each other, presenting to the nations of the world no broad frontage of sovereignty and power. They knew a weak government would produce confusion at home and breed contempt abroad, and, worse than all, would

constantly invite foreign alliance and intervention, to the final destruction of that independence which had been purchased with so much treasure and blood. The old Federalists garnered and preserved the fruits of the American Revolution. They believed that so long as a government is "of the people" and "by the people" it will not cease to be also "*for* the people." The outcry of that day against "consolidated government," with which ambitious demagogues were frightening the ignorant, did not alarm the old Federalists, who were the true friends of the people and the real Republicans of their day.

Such was the character of the

party which bore us through the critical period of our early history, leaving us as a legacy the Federal Union, which Lincoln, with the help of the Union army, saved.

Opposed to the Federalists, however, was another party of political philosophers, who, in their dread of centralization, opposed the adoption of the Federal Constitution. In the days of war they had been good destroyers, but they were not equally good as builders. The wrongs they had suffered under King George not unnaturally led them to distrust all forms of government, hence centralization meant to them only a renewal of despotism. They thought the people's only safeguard lay in the

weakness of the central government.

That was an age in which the infection of "red republicanism" was abroad in the world. Rousseau had dreamed intoxicating and contagious dreams. Voltaire had philosophized and sneered. The mad re-action against long-abused power had come, and in France the chasm was already opening to engulf the monstrosities of ages. Alexander Hamilton's wise saying that "the vigor of government is essential to the security of liberty," was then, as a consequence, far less appreciated than it is to-day.

In 1787, however, the country was prostrate and the tottering old Confederation was powerless to

give relief. Riot, repudiation, and anarchy were in the very air. As a choice of evils the people at last, with many misgivings, accepted the Union. But it was power grudgingly given, and repented by many of the rampant revolutionists of that day almost as quickly as bestowed.

The heresy of 1787, that the best government is the weakest government, and that whatever government we have should be distrusted by the people and hampered as much as possible in its action, in order to insure the liberty of the individual, survived in the form of "State sovereignty" to produce infinite mischief during full three-quarters of a century of our sub-

sequent history. Attempts were made, after the Constitution was adopted, to practically nullify it by what was called "strict construction." The theory was held, that each State of the Union had the right to judge for itself what powers were conferred by the Constitution upon the national government. Such was, in effect, the doctrine of the "Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions," and it was a doctrine sincerely advocated in that day by many men who were really attached to the cause of civil liberty, but who seemed not to know the means by which, alone, can liberty be insured.*

* Thomas Jefferson lived and died in the belief that each State of the Union was a sovereign nation, and that these several nations had, by

Later, the motives of the foes of nationality changed. The slavery question arose, and "strict construction" and "State rights"—at first largely speculative political doctrines—became the pretext for the slave power's frantic effort to fortify and intrench slavery. Accordingly, in 1861, the old slavocracy of the South, after long threats, resolved to trample down

---

adopting the Constitution, formed a compact — a sort of treaty — which each of the States had a right to construe for itself, there being no common judicial power over them. On April 8, 1826, less than three months before he died, Jefferson wrote a letter — being the last but four of those preserved in his Works — in which letter he said: "I think with you, also, that the Constitution of the United States is a compact of independent nations, subject to the rules acknowledged in similar cases, as well that of amendment provided within itself, as, in case of abuse, the justly dreaded but unavoidable *ultimo ratio gentium.*" —Jefferson's Works (Putnam), col. 10, p. 385.

the government of George Washington and the grand old Federalists, and upon its ruins to erect a slave confederacy. And then it was that the Union army, called into being by Abraham Lincoln and acting under his sagacious policy, met and slew together both slavery and State sovereignty. In the fierce arbitrament of war, and through the terrific adjudication of force and blood, the Federal Constitution at length received its final and authoritative construction.

I THUS recapitulate facts well known merely to show that in the constitutional development of the nation Abraham Lincoln stands in line of direct succession from

those great constructive statesmen who formed and set in operation the government of the United States. He finished their great work. In the highest sense he was himself a constructive statesman. He was a conservative, a saviour —not a destroyer. He stands pre-eminently for law and order, for the conservation of popular institutions, for human rights secured and enforced—not by somebody's uncertain impulse, but guaranteed by inexorable public law.

Back of Lincoln we see, among many others, Washington, Madison, Franklin, Gouverneur Morris, John Jay, Robert Morris, and that other colossus of American statesmanship, Alexander Hamilton. But

between these men and Lincoln were many others conspicuous for great services rendered to the same great cause. John Marshall, of Virginia, statesman and judge — belonging in a degree to both periods — who for thirty-four years, as head of the Federal judiciary, read "between the lines" of the Constitution, and found there the "implied powers" by the exercise of which Lincoln was at length able to save the Union; Andrew Jackson, who laid low beneath the mandate of his imperious will the first outbreak against national sovereignty, arousing by his appeal to the people of South Carolina a national enthusiasm which had not yet spent itself when Lincoln de-

livered his First Inaugural; Henry Clay, the greatest of parliamentary leaders, who applied his rare powers to the healing expedient of compromise, thus relieving the strain until the cement of the Union had time to set and become firm; Daniel Webster, the invincible defender of the Constitution, who in debate combined the strength of Goliath and the skill of David, overwhelming the enemies of the Union with torrents of logic and eloquence; Thomas H. Benton, the sturdy and truculent old patriot, himself representing a slave State, whose every heart-throb was true to the nation he served — all these great nationalists, and many others equally devoted though perhaps

less conspicuous, had consecrated themselves to the maintenance of the union of the States. But to Abraham Lincoln, among them all, it was given to act and suffer in the fierce heat and light of terrific and final conflict. From the cross of national redemption whereon he agonized, was at length borne away forever the great sin of disunion, which like a malignant spirit had so long rent our fair land.

BUT the field of Lincoln's statesmanship embraced more than a mere constitutional doctrine. The destruction of the Union as a political end, without an ulterior object in view, would, in 1861, have been sheer madness, however doubtful

the policy of its original formation might have seemed to some of the colonists. In 1860 the nation had demonstrated its right to live, and but for the slave interest the doctrine of State sovereignty would have died with the generation that wrote and adopted the "Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions." It was because the Union had proved less subservient to the slave interest than was desired, that the South, by a convenient application of this doctrine of State rights, sought to disrupt the Union and set up a distinctive slave confederacy. The constitutional question and the slavery question were thus thrown together into the crucible of war.

The Republicans, in 1860, had no purpose to abolish slavery, nor was it the then-avowed principles of that party which slaveholders feared. Far more ominous than the platform of any political party was the moral sentiment of the civilized world which the South saw everywhere rising against her favorite institution. The fact that "Uncle Tom's Cabin" found millions of eager readers, both in Europe and America, was to Southern statesmen far more disquieting than any party declaration. Adverse public opinion—that universal solvent of modern democracy—threatened to dissolve the very rock upon which the industrial and social institutions of the South had been built.

The high falsetto which a few abolitionists were singing would have excited only contempt in the South but for the contagion which, in spite of all Northern assurances, was known to be in that cry. The South knew abolition fire was falling upon tinder, not only all over the North but all over the world; and, morals aside, there was real wisdom in the plan of forming a new government, of which slavery should be the corner stone. An institution like slavery must be the corner stone or nothing.

Lincoln was not less opposed to slavery on moral grounds than any man in the nation, but when he declared he had no constitutional power, and therefore no purpose, to

interfere with slavery in the Southern States, he was perfectly conscientious. When the War came on, Lincoln ceased to speak of slavery and spoke only of the Union. He always seized upon the largest fact. He knew, if the old abolitionists did not, that national preservation was the real stake in that contest. As Chief Executive he rightly disclaimed jurisdiction over slavery in time of peace, but I think he never doubted his right, as Commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy, to save the Union by any means fitting and necessary to accomplish that end—even to the destruction of slavery by an executive proclamation.

The idea of emancipation seemed

to grow upon Lincoln through the early months of 1862, and by midsummer of that year his course was determined. Starting out only to preserve the Union, Lincoln, by force of circumstances and through the inexorable logic of events, became the liberator of a race. He was the most modest of men, and distinctly disclaimed any personal credit for emancipation. He wrote, in April, 1864, "I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me." This was honest and it was true, for in the stress of war, events, under a popular government, must to a large extent control everybody. In the same letter, further discussing the credit for emancipation, he rev-

erently said, "God alone can claim it."

Exactly one month before the preliminary Proclamation was issued, Lincoln had written to Horace Greeley these ever-memorable words:

> "If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object is to save the Union, and not either to save or destroy slavery."

It argues nothing against Lincoln's sincerity that when he wrote the words above quoted, the draft of the great Proclamation was lying in his desk awaiting only a Union victory to precede its issu-

ance, in order that it might not seem to the public to be a mere desperate expedient. Indeed, the student of Lincoln's writings cannot fail to see that at least as early as March, 1862—fully five months before he wrote this letter to Greeley—Lincoln had come to the conclusion that the War must in the end be given a turn that would destroy slavery, not merely to gratify his personal wish in the matter, much as he hated slavery, but because of the inexorable logic of events.

On April 4, 1864, he wrote to A. G. Hodges these words, "I aver that, to this day, I have done no official act in mere deference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery."

Lincoln was not an idealist. He was not one of those moral egotists who are wont to set their own scruples of conscience above statutes. By nature a conservative, he would not resort to revolutionary measures under guise of law. He was, in fact, the highest example of a constitutional ruler. When the hour came that emancipation might fairly be judged a military necessity, and when the public opinion of the loyal States was ready to accept it as such, then, and not before, Lincoln meant to strike slavery down. The time at length came, and Lincoln struck the blow which has resounded many times round the world; and thus what seems one of the most radical measures of Amer-

ican history came, in fact, from one of the most conservative and cautious minds which ever ruled in our councils.

BELIEVING firmly the time would soon come when emancipation must be proclaimed, Lincoln had long been earnestly—almost pathetically—urging the border States to themselves adopt gradual emancipation and take compensation for their slaves. He procured the passage of an Act or Resolution by Congress under which they could have done this; and, in a Proclamation upon the subject, issued May 19, 1862, he eloquently said:

"To the people of these [border] States I now earnestly appeal. I do not argue—

I beseech you to make the argument for yourselves. You cannot, if you would, be blind to the signs of the times. . . . This proposal makes common cause for a common object. . . . It acts not the Pharisee. . . . So much good has not been done by one effort in all past time as in the providence of God it is now your high privilege to do. May the vast future not have to lament that you have neglected it."

Again, to the Senators and Representatives of the border States, in July, 1862, he addressed a letter, in which, among other things, he told them the War would soon destroy slavery in their States "by mere friction and abrasion." He told them much of the value of slave property was already gone, and urged them to favor compensated emancipation; and then, with that terseness and force of which

he was so great a master, he added, "How much better for you, as seller, and the nation, as buyer, to sell out and buy out that without which the War never could have been, than to sink both the thing to be sold, and the price of it, in cutting one another's throats."

It seems incredible, in the light of events, that such appeals to the good sense and the true interests of the border States could have fallen upon deaf ears, and the fact that Lincoln's border State policy was scoffed at alike by those it was intended to benefit and by those Northern idealists—such as Horace Greeley and Wendell Phillips, who were always ready to burn other people upon the pyre of their

immolating goodness—only serves to illustrate the deep intrenchment of slavery in the popular interest and prejudice. If Lincoln could, in the Spring of 1862, have wrested from all future sympathy with the Rebellion, those slave States which remained in the Union, by inducing them to voluntarily adopt emancipation, by that very act the great game would have been won. Had the one State of Kentucky heeded Lincoln's appeal and voluntarily abolished slavery, it would have been a moral blow more decisive than many military victories, which would indeed have shaken the Southern Confederacy to its very foundations. Lincoln saw this clearly, but his critics among the

Northern radicals seemed utterly incapable of appreciating his "border State policy." Greeley, about this time, said in the *Tribune*, that when Lincoln prayed he said, "O Lord, I would like to have You on my side, but, O Lord, I just *must* have Kentucky." Lincoln's great anxiety that citizens of the loyal slave States should receive pay for their slaves gave rise to Ralph Waldo Emerson's celebrated epigram, —

"Pay the owner for the slave,
And fill the bag to the brim;
Who is the owner? The slave is the owner
And ever was; pay him!"

Lincoln had always realized that to check the spread of slavery was a long step toward its abolition. In

1858 he wisely said the country must ultimately become "all one thing or all the other." The wise men of the South clearly saw this was true, and acted upon it. Had slavery from the first been freely admitted to all our new Territories, it would soon have become national, and Robert Toombs might have fulfilled a threat he is said to have made, that he would some day call the roll of his slaves at the foot of Bunker Hill monument. On the other hand, had slavery been strictly confined to the area it occupied prior to 1820, emancipation would probably have come long before this time, even had there been no war.

L I N C O L N

IN proclaiming freedom Lincoln is commonly thought to have reached the summit of his moral grandeur. The act was certainly great in itself, and equally great in the manner of its accomplishment. It was natural, however, that admirers of the great anti-slavery agitators should dispute Lincoln's title to the historic credit for emancipation. Many thought Lincoln's Proclamation lost its moral grandeur in the fact that it was issued under the force of military necessity, and thus became a mere incident in the preservation of the Union. I must, however, dissent from this view, and insist that Abraham Lincoln's abolitionism did not lose its ethical quality in its

respect for established law and in its well-tempered expediency. Any fool could shout and say slavery must be abolished, but it took a statesman to find a way to abolish it. The old abolitionists blew the reckless clarion blast which alarmed the Northern conscience and precipitated the conflict. The flashlight of their audacious and consuming eloquence fell upon slavery and revealed its enormity. But the man who marshalled and led the material and moral forces which finally crushed the Rebellion and destroyed slavery had need to be something more than a reckless agitator.

Prominent in our War period, upon the Northern side, were many

idealists, among whom some of the old "higher law" abolitionists were the purest types. An idealist (to depart somewhat from the lexicons) is one who counts his chickens before the eggs have been laid. He is lacking in a sense of the proportion and relation of things, and takes himself so seriously that he loses the power of seeing the actual situation. In the last analysis he lacks humor. In the rapturous contemplation of the end he forgets all about means. The Northern idealists, or radicals, thought that if Lincoln would only sound a great blast upon a ram's horn all the walls of the Jericho of Rebellion would fall flat. Acknowledging no responsibility, these men could talk

much nonsense without having to account for the folly of their speech.

Lincoln, however, was President, and as such he felt gravely responsible to the country for his every act and word. He did not fly through the air with the theorists, but walked slowly and painfully upon the ground—and rough, indeed, was his footing. He walked among the "plain people," and communed with them day by day; and as he walked he took note of all the rocks and chasms and quagmires which lay in his pathway—little matters, for which the mere theorists felt only contempt.

The truth is, the old abolitionists had so long combated a majority

upon the slavery issue that they could not appreciate the wisdom of a President who waited for the concurrence of a majority before acting. To Wendell Phillips the agitator, delivering a philippic against slavery, the approval of a majority was not necessary. His temperament was such that the violent opposition of numbers acted upon him as a stimulant. But to Lincoln the President, formulating and enforcing practical measures of government for a sovereign people, the moral support of public opinion was an absolute necessity. Those who, almost before Lincoln's right hand was lowered, insisted that he should abandon the Constitution he had sworn to support, and resort

to that vague delusion called the "higher law"—without any then apparent military necessity—had little appreciation of the man or the occasion. In the days of war most of these men went their own wild, unreasoning way, and heaped obloquy upon the man who was completing their work in the only possible way it could then have been completed.

The distinct issue on which Lincoln won the presidency was the prevention of the spread of slavery—not its abolition—and on that issue he received less than one-half of the popular vote, excluding from the calculation the votes of the States that afterwards seceded. However great may be the wonder

of it in the light of events, the fact is that a large majority of the whole American people stood, in 1861, against Lincoln's moderate personal views on the slavery question. Out of twenty-three Christian ministers residing in Springfield, Illinois, in 1860, twenty were opposed to the election of Lincoln.* A quarrel between two factions of the Democratic party as to the particular degree of legal encouragement slavery should receive in its struggle for territory and supremacy had resulted in Lincoln's election. No wonder he refused to at

* This statement is based on the language of Lincoln himself, as Hon. Newton Bateman, then Superintendent of Public Instruction in Illinois, reported to Dr. J. G. Holland. — Holland's "Life of Lincoln," page 236.

once launch an emancipation policy when even his own moderate principle of slavery-restriction could scarcely be sustained.

Lincoln was acquainted, perhaps better than any other public man, with that prejudice which in those days often led even good Union men, in the Western States, to declare they would not support an "abolition war." He knew many good friends of the Union believed that emancipation would be followed by a horrible war of races, or by a still more horrible amalgamation of whites and blacks. To such he held out his zealous but impracticable scheme of colonizing the negroes in South America or Africa. It was exactly because Lin-

coln's early associations had so thoroughly familiarized him with the prejudice which used to fairly shudder at sound of the then-current phrase "nigger equality"—nay, because he even partook in a degree of that prejudice himself—that he proved the fittest man to stand at the helm.

Lincoln thrust forward the Union issue because he knew there were at least twenty men in the North for the Union where there was one for emancipation. The boast, early made, that a united South would be hurled against a divided North, was, upon the slavery question, fully realized. Lincoln's party was distinctly pledged not to disturb slavery in the States

where it existed, and the pro-slavery Unionist was as vehement in urging the sanctity of this promise as the Eastern radical was in declaring that treason had put slavery beyond constitutional protection.

When the Emancipation Proclamation was at length issued it was bitterly assailed as a revolutionary subversion of the Constitution, and yet it is a remarkable fact, that none of his critics ever stated the legal case against emancipation so strongly or so well as Lincoln once stated it himself. To O. H. Browning, who scolded him for revoking Fremont's Emancipation Proclamation, on September 22, 1861, he wrote:

"If the general needs them [the slaves] he can seize them and use them, but when the need is past it is not for him to fix their permanent future condition. That must be settled according to the laws made by law-makers, and not by military proclamations. The proclamation on the point in question is simply dictatorship. It assumes that the general may do *anything* he pleases: confiscate the lands and free the slaves of *loyal* people as well as of disloyal ones. And going the whole figure, I have no doubt, would be more popular with some thoughtless people than that which has been done. But I cannot assume this reckless position nor allow others to assume it on *my* responsibility. You speak of it as being the only means of *saving* the government. On the contrary, it is, itself, a surrender of the government. Can it be pretended that it is any longer the government of the United States — any government of Constitution and laws — wherein a general or President may make permanent rules of property by proclamation? . . . What I object to is, that I, as President, shall expressly or impliedly seize and exercise the permanent legislative functions of the government."

This whole letter to Browning is most interesting in a study of the development of the emancipation policy, and should be compared with his Proclamation annulling the emancipation edict of Gen. Hunter, eight months later, May 19, 1862. In the latter he says:

"Whether it be competent for me, as Commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy, to declare the slaves of any State or States free, and whether at any time, in any case, it shall have become a necessity indispensable to the maintenance of the government to exercise such supposed power, are questions which, under my responsibility, I reserve to myself and which I cannot feel justified in leaving to the decision of commanders in the field."

Here was a distinct advance upon the position announced in the Browning letter. He had found

the true basis for his emancipation policy, and only awaited the development of public opinion and the march of events.

LINCOLN had the sense to keep his eye upon great facts and to reckon with large causes. He was sagacious enough to perceive that the supreme issue of the struggle was national preservation, and that this issue embraced the slavery question and all others. Greeley's silly advice to let the Southern States "go in peace," and Wendell Phillips' still more picturesque folly that we would "build a bridge of gold and pay their toll over it," could meet no favor in a mind so sane as Lincoln's. He

knew if the government proved strong enough to cope with the Rebellion it would, in the end, prove strong enough to deal with slavery and ultimately abolish it by peaceful means. He said in his Peoria speech, in 1854, "Much as I hate slavery, I would consent to the extension of it rather than see the Union dissolved, just as I would consent to any great evil to avoid a greater one." From this sentiment he never receded.

Had the Southern people acquiesced in Lincoln's election and in the supremacy of his doctrines they would certainly have prolonged slavery, and in the end, perhaps, have insured a liberal compensation for their slaves. But

ultimately either slavery or the Union had to go down.

I HAVE sometimes thought that Lincoln, with prophetic eye, saw the destruction of slavery from the very beginning, but with a patience and self-control which find no parallel awaited the slow turning of the mills of the gods. He had the large sense to perceive that the spirit of the times would in the end abolish slavery, and that to force the issue would only insure the success of the Confederacy. He recognized a plan higher than human plans. He knew when he wrote the Greeley letter that the march of events had put it past human power to save slavery with the

Union. He felt that a hand mightier than his own was writing the doom of slavery upon the fiery war-cloud, and so believing, and so praying, too, he patiently accepted criticism, and even calumny—first from the extreme abolitionists and afterwards from the pro-slavery Unionists. He knew a premature expression, officially, of his belief that the War was destined to destroy slavery would probably take from the Union army a hundred thousand bayonets, and that this might turn the tide against the Union. Had the border slave States been repelled by the least rudeness of treatment from the administration, the Union would probably never have been saved.

Lincoln himself put the case tersely when he said of the border States, "With them against us, the job is too big for us." Realizing that public opinion was the only effective abolitionist, Lincoln stayed his pen, and allowed the Union volunteers to write with their bayonets, in the blood of angry battles, the real proclamation of freedom. He knew well that a proclamation so written would never need to be recanted.

IN the Spring of 1861 there were many persons in the North who saw in Lincoln only a well-meaning, shrewd, but inexperienced person, whose redeeming trait, they hoped, would prove to be docility.

Each of these persons felt sure Lincoln would need much sage advice, and expected to supply it, and even to largely control his administration. These self-appointed guardians were unprepared to receive a national saviour from the Nazareth of the prairies. They at once began telling Lincoln what to do, and it has been aptly said he received worse advice, and more of it, than any statesman that ever lived.

This will not seem wonderful when we remember how utterly the sudden rending of the Union had dazed the American people. In the confusion of that awful crisis even wise men said and did silly things. William H. Seward — cer-

tainly a wise statesman, under ordinary conditions — in the face of threatened civil war lost both heart and judgment, and gave Lincoln some very bad and startling advice. Chase marred his otherwise splendid record with querulous carpings, all through the War, against a chief he did not in any degree understand and whose superior he felt he was.

That Lincoln, inexperienced as he was, "kept his head" through the panic of timidity, distrust, and hysteria which marked the early months of his administration, gently but firmly resisting the bad advice which came to him from so many high sources, is one of the strongest proofs of the firm texture

of his mind. To keep on good terms with advisers of assumed superiority and at the same time not take their advice, requires great shrewdness and tact, and no statesman ever knew better how to do this than Lincoln. He was too great to stand for a moment upon mere pride of opinion. He was always ready to hear advice, but his ultimate monitor was within. He said, "It is my duty to hear all, but at last I must, within my sphere, judge what to do and what to forbear." This self-reliance, in practice, gave mortal offense to many prominent Republicans, who could never bring themselves to admit that the basis of it was real superiority, and not arrogance.

Lincoln was ruling a democracy, and to rule a real democracy involves problems never thought of by such rulers as Cæsar, Cromwell, and Napoleon. He had a great military problem, and this was complicated with a still more perplexing political problem, to say nothing of the other problems that were presented by our foreign relations. An early blow at slavery, it was thought, would assist us with foreign countries, but Lincoln knew such a move would set our domestic politics awry. His first wise thought was to keep the peace among all the adherents of the Union, and the wise desire to do this furnishes the key to his whole policy. He recognized no

line of political cleavage save that between the loyal and the disloyal. He often spoke of "balancing matters," and no man ever knew better than he how to strike the prudent average.

If any man in this world ever understood that capricious thing called "public opinion" that man was Abraham Lincoln. He watched the current of public thought and prejudice as intently as a cautious pilot watches the face of a river for evidence of bars and snags. It has been well said that he possessed a wonderful sixth sense for the feeling of the average American. He caught the faintest sound which presaged a storm of popular passion, and the sagacity

and skill with which he avoided the numberless eddies and whirlpools of the slavery question, while steering on to the great end of national preservation, have, in my judgment, never been equalled in the field of statesmanship. Lincoln's exquisite sense of humor played an important part in saving the Union. It kept him from doing foolish things. He told a delegation of Chicago ministers who came to inform him that it was "God's will" that he should at once launch an emancipation proclamation, that such a measure would be like the Pope's Bull against the Comet, because it would have no force beyond the military lines, and it would remain to enforce it by put-

ting down the Rebellion just as he was striving to do. He thus anticipated the very criticism that was, in fact, made in the English newspapers when the Proclamation was issued: namely, that the President had assumed to abolish slavery everywhere except in the territory where he could have abolished it, and had let it alone in the territory subject to his jurisdiction.

The great Proclamation was wisely withheld until the extreme anti-slavery element in New England was ready to break from the vanguard of the Union column, and thus it came late enough in the evolution of public opinion barely to save to the cause the still more important rear-guard in the border and Western States.

THUS we see that it was a main feature of Lincoln's statesmanship that he distinctly comprehended his problem; and not only his one great problem, but all its minor related problems. Such was the clearness of his vision, such the breadth of his views, such the grasp and sanity of his judgment, that within his policy all things found their proper place and relation, and all the din and smoke of terrific conflict could not confuse him or put him from his purpose. To use an illustration of his own kind, he never went snipe-shooting when there were bear in sight.

Lincoln succeeded in holding the border slave States in line upon the paramount Union issue even while

the institution of slavery, which they wished to save, was being trampled to death beneath the feet of the Union army. He played the eager Union sentiment of the West against the institution of slavery, which had caused the War, until the West finally came to agree with New England that slavery must be struck down. In other words, Lincoln bridged with his policy the vast stretch of opinion which lay between the rabid abolitionism of the East and the pro-slavery Unionism of the Western and border States, and thus he was at last able to hurl the whole force of Union sentiment on this side of the battle line against the armies of the Confederacy.

A task so complex called for a statesman of broad views, great self-poise, iron endurance, and sublime courage—courage to act, and, even in a greater degree, courage to forbear. Struggling, like Laocoön, in the serpent-coils of the slavery complication, stung by the wasps of incontinent radicalism, hectored by swarms of Northern men who set the letter of the Constitution above the nation's life, Lincoln yet had the monumental patience and foresight nearly always to do and say the wise thing. "The occasion is piled high with difficulty," said he, "and we must rise with the occasion."

L I N C O L N

LINCOLN'S search for a general was long and painful and at first quite as fruitless as that of Diogenes for an honest man—and he carried a better lantern, too. A few military victories would have cleared the atmosphere, but when Lincoln asked his generals for victories they tried to swap jobs with him, and gave him advice on the slavery question. McClellan, just after fleeing in panic from the Chickahominy with a magnificent army, which under another commander might have bivouacked in the Confederate capital, found time to write Lincoln a lengthy letter of general advice, in which, among many other impertinences, he said "the abolition of slavery must not be thought of."

On the other hand, two or three of the lesser generals in the field, who, it must be said, were not particularly formidable to the common enemy, sought the cheap applause of the unthinking by issuing proclamations of emancipation in their military districts, thus adding to the embarrassments of the one great, patient man who saw all the phases of the Union problem.

IT is quite the fashion to say that previous to 1860 Lincoln had not shown the qualities of political leadership, and that his nomination for President was merely a happy accident of politics. Professor Von Holst, in his "Consti-

tutional History of the United States," has refuted this error. Lincoln's nomination was no accidental honor, won by superior management over the real leaders of the party. In the great revolt of 1854 against the conspiracy to open up new territory to slavery, though less officially conspicuous than Seward, Lincoln soon proved himself the most sagacious leader of the new party. Lincoln's action in one conspicuous party crisis refutes, once for all, the notion that he drifted helplessly with the tide and was not a party leader.

When Senator Douglas, at the Winter session of 1857-8, broke with President Buchanan, and made his brilliant fight in the

Senate against the admission of Kansas as a slave State under the fraudulent Lecompton Constitution, many prominent anti-slavery men were dazzled by the political pyrotechnics of the "Little Giant." Douglas actually hypnotized some of his former antagonists into the belief that he was fighting their battles for them. Horace Greeley accepted him as a new Moses, and advised the Illinois Republicans to support him for reëlection to the Senate. Seward prudently said nothing publicly, but he was well known to be ready to acquiesce in the leadership of Douglas and in his reëlection. He, indeed, made a speech in the Senate virtually waiving the vital Republican prin-

ciple, "No more slave territory." Politics never made stranger bedfellows than when the "Free-soilers" of New England were found sympathizing with Douglas in his contest for reëlection.

It was Lincoln who saw clearly that for the Republicans to support Douglas for the Senate would be a practical surrender upon the slavery question. He declared that the issue was deeper than "the mere question of fact" whether or not a particular Constitution for Kansas had been legally adopted by the voters. He showed the Republicans that the man who had repeatedly declared he did not care "whether slavery was voted down or voted up" in Kansas, just so the

vote was fair, could not be safely entrusted with the ark of the Republican covenant; and when Douglas returned to Illinois in triumph to receive the plaudits of his admirers, Lincoln promptly challenged him to mortal political combat.

In the great debate which followed, Lincoln exhumed from out the clap-trap and rubbish in which sophistry sought to envelop it, the essential moral question of that great controversy. In his speech at Springfield, June 16, 1858 — the greatest political speech ever delivered in this country — he boldly proclaimed the startling truth that we had come to the crisis where the country must choose, once for

all, between freedom and slavery as a permanent national policy, or else see the "divided house" topple down. This was more than four months before Seward proclaimed the "irrepressible conflict" in his Rochester speech. The master feats by which the "Little Giant" hoped to save his popularity in the North, without quite ruining his political prospects in the South, came to a speedy end before the keen and searching logic of his antagonist.

When Lincoln was defeated for the Senate, as his friends warned him would be the case upon so radical a platform as he had made for himself, he accepted the result with the complacency of a true philoso-

pher. He knew that while he had lost his battle he had not lost his principles. Nay, he knew he had laid the foundations of ultimate success for the cause of freedom. He had done more than this; he had proved himself the most sagacious and fearless leader of the new party, by true merit and service raised to that great eminence.

Equally absurd is it, in my judgment, to say that after this great debate with Douglas, in 1858, Lincoln was an "unknown man." His antagonist was the most noted man in the politics of that day. It was not without reason that he was called a "giant," for a giant, indeed, he was in point of political shrewdness, force, and audacity.

The newspapers took note of every move of the great Illinois Senator, and Lincoln's temerity in challenging him excited wonder. The debate was, of course, followed intently by every man who paid any attention whatever to political affairs. However obscure Lincoln may previously have been, his conflict with Douglas brought him into the very focus of public attention.

Lincoln's great plainness and simplicity of speech and argument won upon all who heard or read what he said. He never talked "over the heads" of his hearers. His were the arguments against slavery which found lodgment in the minds and hearts of the common people. His speech at Peoria,

October 16, 1854; his speech at Springfield, June 16, 1858; his debates with Douglas, and his speech at Cooper Institute, New York, February 27, 1860, are easily the masterpieces of all the anti-slavery literature preceding the War. In them are the body and the blood of the republicanism of that day. In them Lincoln made the platform whereon he won the battle for slavery-restriction.*

Furthermore, Lincoln was not, at any period of his career, of that easy-going temper which runs with

* I do not include the celebrated "lost speech" delivered by Lincoln at the Bloomington Convention, May 29, 1856, because, while we know that speech greatly moved his auditors, we do not know what he said. I have never believed Whitney's alleged reproduction of that speech to be genuine.

the tide. While he was President some thought he drifted aimlessly, but in fact he sailed the ship. His strong hand was always upon the helm, but he had sense enough to know that the ship could not be sailed against wind and tide. When he met baffling weather he knew how to tack. He could even seek a temporary haven and wait for fair winds, but he never turned back or abandoned the journey. He knew there was time for all things, and he never acted under the influence of panic. He bided his time, and with a patience as deep as nature, as unfailing as destiny, he awaited events.

L I N C O L N

THE most conspicuous personal quality of Lincoln, as I see him, is manly strength—a self-confidence, heroic but unexpressed. To me, Lincoln seems on great occasions a solitary man, communing with himself—never, indeed, arrogant; not by any means always seeing his way through to the end, but believing, with much confidence, that he saw as far as any, and yet prudently concealing, in large degree, the confidence he felt in the correctness of his own views. I am aware few took this view of Lincoln in his lifetime. The extreme good-fellowship of his lighter hours seems to disprove it; and so many incidents are current showing his tenderness of heart—such as his

strangely intense and emotional letters to Joshua Speed, and the alacrity with which he is said to have pardoned condemned soldiers against the protests of his generals—that the world is in danger of concluding that Lincoln's chief side was his emotional side and that there was in him no iron.

That he was gentle, merciful, kind, and tolerant, that he was above petty resentments, and always ready to cover the faults of his fellows with the mantle of charity, no one will deny. But these qualities were not incompatible with strength of character. To be firm and enforce one's purpose it is not necessary to be a tyrant, and what seemed weakness

in some of Lincoln's public acts was often the result of prudence and sound judgment. For instance, I doubt whether Lincoln ever set aside a death sentence when it was not good policy to do it. We have, I hope, gotten far past the barbarism of shooting a soldier boy to death for sleeping at his post, and Lincoln had too much sense to approve such a sentence though his heart had been harder than stone. Convictions for offences which involved a betrayal of the cause, or those evincing great moral turpitude, he could approve without a qualm, and he did approve many sentences — the conviction of Fitz John Porter being the most conspicuous.

I NOW go a step further, and say that Lincoln was a great ruler of men; and the man who has learned to rule others must have begun by learning to rule himself. Lincoln, contrary to current belief, was capable of great, righteous wrath, and sometimes of terrific anger, but his wonderful self-control ordinarily enabled him to conceal the storms of passion that must often have rent his soul throughout the trying days of the War. He never blustered; his method of ruling was not so crude. Nor was he one of Gratiano's men, whose visages—

"Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,
And do a willful stillness entertain
With purpose to be dressed in an opinion
Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit,
As who should say, 'I am Sir Oracle.'"

On the contrary, Lincoln was always simple, natural—almost boyish. He disdained all owlish shows of superior wisdom. He was perfectly willing that the men he ruled should believe they were ruling him. He did not fear that some upstart would cheat history and wear his laurels. Referring to the capital way in which he got along with Senator Sumner, he said, with a sly twinkle in his eye, "He thinks he manages me." I think Lincoln knew that he was building for eternity, but with a serene confidence he committed to time the keeping of his matchless fame. Secretary Stanton, according to one account, raised his hand above the President's body a moment after he had

breathed his last, and said, "There lies the greatest ruler of men that has ever lived." Great testimony is this, coming from Stanton.

A VERY great man is elemental. He is, so to speak, a grand division of nature. We now see that Lincoln's purpose and policy moved through the War with all the steadiness and certainty of a cosmic force. His patience under vast discouragements assumes the character of the patience of nature itself. His spirit was never ruffled by enmity or elated by vanity. When a little man is permitted to step suddenly from a puncheon floor to velvet he is apt to become giddy. The political "beggar-on-

horseback," often met with under a popular government, generally thinks, with Jack Cade, that all the sewers are going to run red with claret because he is "king." Though coming from a lowly estate, Lincoln seemed unconscious of his position as the first man of the nation. True to the class which produced him, he left no degrading apology for his breeding or the meagreness of his early conditions. His manliness was in his blood, and we now see that there was never taken to the White House a truer dignity of character, a more firmly-poised intellect, or a more intelligent self-reliance, than went there from the prairies of Illinois with Abraham Lincoln.

WE have seen that Lincoln stands in American history first for national unity. We have seen that he stands also for liberty and the rights of man in subordination to established law. We have seen him, strong as the "unwedgeable and knarled oak," bending others to his purpose. We have also seen him exercising a wisdom and tact rarely found among the endowments of man. To all this I now add that he was the greatest popular leader that has appeared in our country. Out of the jungles of practical politics have grown but few oaks of statesmanship, but Lincoln was one of these oaks; and it is proper, I think, to call him a practical politician in the highest

and best sense of that term. In this field, with the sole exception of Thomas Jefferson, he finds in our history no rival. He was pre-eminently the "man of the people" —not the demagogue who used the people for his purpose, but the statesman who served them and whom they recognized as their own. He led the people for the people's good, and not for his own personal aggrandizement. In Abraham Lincoln the spirit of democracy was incarnate. What he called "the plain people" loved him in life and have canonized him in death, for it is only the common people who can confer enduring fame.

So complete was Lincoln's belief

in the intelligence and honesty of the American people that he never found it expedient to flatter them, but gave them always his honest thoughts. He did not reach the people secondarily, through the medium of local politicians, as is now too much the fashion, but established his political relations directly with every citizen of the Republic. He had no use for the political "machine" of later days.

The standard of Lincoln's judgment and feeling was level with every condition of American life. His communion with the masses was no condescending patronage but a genuine fellowship. He was at home everywhere; he perfectly understood ignorance and preju-

dice; he had charity for them, but he never played the demagogue by appealing to them. The coarseness of the vulgar and ignorant did not shock him as it does many good men who have not had Lincoln's experience. The truth is that the life of this wonderful man measures the whole vast distance between the top and the bottom layers of American society. He grew through all the strata, and at last flowered and bore fruit at the top. It has been well said that he lived all there was of American life, felt all there was of American experience, and therefore in his character and life and work he fairly represented and expressed the American people.

LINCOLN was great enough to sink himself completely in his cause. The fact that Stanton had once treated him with professional discourtesy and had then lately criticised him in his own bitter fashion, was to Lincoln's mind no reason why Stanton should not be made Secretary of War, when it was deemed that his appointment would most aid the cause. It was the country Lincoln wanted served, not himself. The friends of Chase were surprised to learn, in that eminent man's appointment as Chief Justice, that his resignation of the Treasury, though petulant and ill-judged, had left no iron in the soul of the great President. It is now known that Lincoln said,

with the resignation of Chase still in his hands unaccepted, that Chase should be Chief Justice if a vacancy arose.*

A little earlier, when, through the publication of the "Pomeroy Circular," the fact came to light that Chase was scheming against his chief for the presidential nomination in 1864, and Chase, in some confusion at the disclosure, offered his resignation, Lincoln wrote him these most wonderful words, "Whether you shall remain at the head of the Treasury department is a question which I will not permit myself to consider from any standpoint other than my judg-

* Chittenden's "Recollections of Lincoln and his Administration," page 380.

ment of the public service, and in that view I do not perceive occasion for a change." Certainly this was not the letter of a mere politician.

Only a President of great breadth could have written to Grant after the fall of Vicksburg, "I now wish to make a personal acknowledgment that you were right and I was wrong"; and it was Lincoln alone who, in the face of much bitter detraction, saved General Grant to the cause and gave him the opportunity to finally crush the rebellion. He expressed the matter tersely, "I can't spare that man; he fights."

Lincoln's magnanimous treatment of Seward after that gentle-

man had suggested Lincoln's practical abdication in his favor, is now well known; and a still better illustration of the same spirit has come to light since the voluminous biography by Nicolay and Hay was published. Just after the battle of Gettysburg, Lincoln thought that prompt pursuit and battle by Meade would destroy Lee's army before it could re-cross the swollen Potomac. Meade's delay and failure to seize his great opportunity deeply grieved and annoyed the President, who finally sent a peremptory order to forthwith attack Lee—which order was accompanied by perhaps the most remarkable note ever sent by a commander to his subordinate. It ran

substantially thus: "This order is not of record. If you are successful you may destroy it, together with this note; if you fail, publish the order, and I will take the responsibility."*

But why recount such minor incidents to prove Lincoln's unselfish

* An autograph letter of the late James Harlan, of Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, once Secretary of the Interior under Lincoln, written to the author, April 17, 1897, is conclusive authority for the statement in the text. He writes: "The President sent an order, privately, directing Gen. Meade to follow up his victory by an immediate attack on Lee's retreating army, and thus, if possible, prevent the re-crossing of the Potomac by the Confederate forces, accompanied by a confidential letter authorizing him to make the order public in case of disaster and in case of success to destroy both the order and confidential letter. This much you may rely upon as historically true. Whether or not these papers ever reached Gen. Meade I am not able to say. I had supposed, prior to the receipt of your letter, that this incident had remained unknown for twenty years after the close of the War of the Rebellion to everybody except Gen. Meade, Robert T. Lincoln, and myself."

spirit, when it is well known he refused to take to himself the least credit for the act of emancipation? He knew that the entire colored race, those living and those yet to come, grateful for the boon of freedom at his hands, were ready to place his name among the immortals. He knew that the civilized world stood ready with a laurel crown for the emancipator of a race, and yet he could put that crown aside and say, "I have not controlled events; events have controlled me; God alone can claim it."

LINCOLN had read in all charity the secrets of the wonderful book of human nature, and had there learned to allow for the short-

comings of even enemies. He had too much breadth for bitterness. Passion never blew out the lamp of his reason, and from no lips ever came more gracefully the soft answer which turneth away wrath. He had the charity to say, "The Southern people are just what we should be in their situation." Though this man of mercy and gentleness was called by destiny to conduct a gigantic and cruel civil war; though he stood for years at the very storm-centre of an era of passion and hate; though all the pent-up fury and rage of fifty years of bitter contention beat upon him, he left behind not a single bitter memory, and malice itself was disarmed before his great heart

was cold. His utterances will be searched in vain for one harsh word against any of the Southern people, and it is as appropriate as it is touching that Confederate soldiers now come forward as his most eloquent and appreciative eulogists.

LINCOLN was not schooled or learned, but he was educated. He had endured all the agonies of complete mental discipline. The process of his education never ceased, but he spent no time learning the wrong things. His mind was not clogged with useless lumber. His knowledge was all correlated, and his intellectual weapons were as keen as blades of Damas-

cus. His facts were not numerous, but they were always ready for use. He had read men more than books, and it was with men—not books—he had to deal. He studied other men and he also studied himself. He cross-examined his own soul. His growth was evolution rather than acquisition. Botanists tell of a class of plants called the "exogenous," which grow by taking on layers from the outside, and of another class called the "endogenous," which grow from within—from the heart. Lincoln, like the endogenous plant, grew from within. He expanded by the action of subjective moral and intellectual forces. His mind literally "worked itself clear." In all classifications

of humankind Lincoln will stand as an individual, akin to all classes but belonging exclusively to none.

Lincoln had the best of legal minds, but fortunately he never degenerated into what Seward called a "mere lawyer." He took the kernel and rejected the husk. Those who would appreciate his great grasp of constitutional questions must read his State papers and his letters wherein he discusses the war-power of the Executive over slavery and over the right of *habeas corpus*.*

This man had no extensive acquaintance with general literature. He told the artist Carpenter, who

* It will pay well also to read Frederick Trevor Hill's book, "Lincoln the Lawyer," which was published since this paper was written.

spent six months at the White House painting the Emancipation Group, that he never read a novel clear through. Scott, Thackeray, and Hawthorne wrote all their novels within the limits of Lincoln's lifetime, and in the same period Dickens wrote all but two of his; yet Lincoln appears to have known no more of these authors than he did of Æschylus or Homer.

To a mind like Lincoln's, that which has actually happened in this world is far more interesting and far more dramatic than the mere dreams of fiction. In poetry he is known to have read Burns and Byron, and Shakespeare in part, and of the plays that he read he judged that "Macbeth" was

greatest. Mournful verses seemed to strike a chord in his heart, and he was not over-critical as to literary quality. He had read and studied the Bible in the translation of King James, and the influence of its pure and simple style is everywhere apparent in what he wrote. Doubtless Lincoln knew, in outline at least, the history of other countries besides his own, but evidence of the fact is not preserved in his writings.

IN all the writings of Lincoln there are not to be found more than two or three allusions to the classic myths, nor did he often, if at all, point a moral by reference to the history of Greece or

Rome. In an early sophomoric production he barely mentioned the names of Cæsar and Alexander. Once in a letter he referred to Procrustes and his fabled bedstead, and sometimes he jocularly spoke of Stanton, his Secretary of War, as "Mars." Between his nomination and election he read Plutarch's "Lives," in order to justify a statement made by Scripps in a campaign biography. If he ever read the rich mythology of Greece and Rome it made little impression upon him. Mercury, with winged feet, seems to have brought him no message from the gods of old. He heard not the thunders of Jove, the sobs of Niobe, nor the entrancing strains of Or-

pheus' harp; and yet this man, unschooled and unlearned, grasped and solved the political problem of his country and his time. Joseph Jefferson, the actor, in his "Autobiography" (page 30) makes Lincoln, in what he terms a "harangue" to the City Council of Springfield, Illinois, made in 1839, "trace the history of the drama from the time when Thespis acted in a cart, to the stage of to-day." Those who have studied the style of Lincoln and know the range of his illustrations will be somewhat surprised to know that, in 1839, he took Athens, B. C. 600, as his starting point in persuading the city fathers of an obscure western town to repeal an unjust tax against

players! Mr. Jefferson probably introduced Thespis into this account through some substitution of the memory. Jefferson seems not to have known that Lincoln was himself at the time in question (1839) a member of the Board of Trustees of the old town of Springfield. Whatever he did, therefore, must have been done in pursuance of his duties as such member and not as the attorney of Jefferson's father.

But if Lincoln did not read widely, neither did he read anything lightly. He never contracted mental indigestion by gorging his mind with literary sweetmeats. He read sound, strong things, and his mental grasp was wonderful. He never stopped until he had bounded a

subject on all sides. He took nothing upon faith but would know the real truth, though he must, like doubting Thomas, thrust his own hand into the wound. The political history of the United States he knew in its minutest details, particularly those portions relating to slavery, and his ability to interpret historic facts and events in a philosophic way has never been surpassed.

Lincoln's logic was the joint product of honesty and common sense. He had the courage to know and to face the truth. He was willing to go whithersoever his best thought led him. He shared with all great and noble minds that high, unfaltering faith that the right

must, in the end, triumph. The closing sentence of his speech at Cooper Institute is the key to his whole life — "Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it."

IN point of literary merit Lincoln's writings will bear comparison with the best in the English language. His literary style was as unique as his personality — as characteristic of him as the great nose on his face. He wrote Saxon, and demonstrated that a large vocabulary and an ornate style are not necessary to the forceful expression of thought. He addressed himself first to the understanding

and next to the heart. He was one of the greatest masters of the art of statement that has ever written the English tongue. He knew the sources of prejudice and the springs of action. Pathos and humor are judiciously mingled in whatever he said and wrote. He it was who, with the hand of a master, at last lovingly touched the chords which again swelled "the chorus of the Union." He could put a chapter of argument into ten words of speech.

A respectable volume could be filled with passages illustrating the strong, quaint style, apt illustrations, rare Æsopian wisdom, and —upon proper occasion—the pathos and eloquence, which abound

throughout the sayings and writings of Lincoln.

No illustration was too homely to be used if it fitted the case. To Hooker, who had proposed to cross the Rappahannock at an inopportune time, Lincoln wrote, "I would not take any risk of being entangled upon the river like an ox jumped half over a fence, and liable to be torn by dogs front and rear, without a fair chance to gore one way or kick the other."

Again, discussing a plan of campaign—with an apt but inimitable homeliness — he said, that if a certain general could not "skin" he could "hold a leg" for somebody else; and his pithy saying that "You can fool all of the people

some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time," has become an aphorism of American politics.*

In denying the broad charge made by Douglas that he was in favor of negro equality, Lincoln pronounced, and on several occasions repeated, his great definition of the negro's rights. "In the right," said he, "to eat the bread, without leave of anybody, which his own hand earns, the negro is the equal of myself, of Judge Doug-

* An effort has been made to claim this saying for P. T. Barnum. Mr. Barnum's authorship has not been proved, and there is at least one man of my acquaintance living, "of sound mind and memory," who heard Lincoln use that language in a speech at Bloomington, Ill., as early as 1856.

las, or of any other man." Again, speaking upon the same subject, he said, "I protest against the counterfeit logic which concludes, because I do not want a black woman for a slave I must necessarily want her for a wife."

When Douglas proposed to settle the vexed question of slavery extension by "popular sovereignty," Lincoln quaintly said this meant, that "if any man chooses to enslave another no third man shall be allowed to object"; and the effort to maintain both the Dred Scott decision and "popular sovereignty" at the same time he said meant, "that a thing may be lawfully driven away from a place where it has a lawful right to go."

To a number of persons who called to remonstrate against his method of conducting the War, he, with some impatience, said: "Suppose all you are worth was in gold and you had put it into the hands of Blondin to carry across Niagara — would you shake the cable, or keep shouting to him, 'Blondin, stand up a little straighter! Blondin, stoop a little more! Go a little faster! Lean a little more to the north! Lean a little more to the south!' No — you would hold your breath as well as your tongue, and keep your hands off until he was safe over." To another faultfinder, who thought Lincoln's measures too severe, he wrote, "Would you drop the War where it is, or would

you prosecute it with elder-stock squirts charged with rose water?"

In reprimanding a young officer for quarrelling, he said, "Quarrel not at all. . . . Yield larger things to which you can show no more than equal right, and yield lesser ones though clearly your own. Better give your path to a dog than be bitten by him in contesting for the right. Even killing the dog would not cure the bite."

To his friend, Joshua Speed, he once said, "Speed, die when I may, I want it said of me by those who knew me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower when I thought a flower would grow."

He could be terribly severe with-

out descending to scurrility. Alluding to Douglas' "don't care" policy on slavery he said, "I suppose the institution of slavery really looks small to him. He is so put up by nature that a lash upon his back would hurt him, but a lash on anybody else's back does not hurt him."

Replying to a committee of laboring men who waited upon him with an address in 1864, he closed with these words, than which I know of nothing wiser or better in the English language:

"That some should be rich shows that others may become rich, and hence is just encouragement to industry and enterprise. Let not him who is houseless pull down the house of another, but let him labor diligently and build one for himself, thus by example

assuring that his own shall be safe from violence when built."

LINCOLN was certainly not without personal ambition, and yet with only his own advancement as an object he would have lived and died in comparative obscurity. Had he been called to the bench he would have made a great and just judge, like John Marshall. It praises him to say that he could never have made himself famous except in a noble cause. Some have indulged in fruitless speculations as to what Lincoln would have been had he been differently educated, and as to whether or not, in later years, he would have added to or taken from his fame had not the

cruel assassin struck him down. Putting aside such idle thoughts, we may well bow in devout thankfulness that in the tide of time Lincoln came as a boon to our country; and our hearts may swell with a just pride that his career, from birth to final martyrdom, furnishes a most conclusive testimony to the value of our free institutions.

What Washington had once been to the American Colonies, Lincoln proved himself to the American Nation. It has been said that the tears a good man staunches are shed upon his grave, and on Lincoln's was certainly poured out a flood of the keenest popular grief which political history has known. Even as one revered as the Saviour

of a lost world was born in a stable and cradled in a manger, so this Liberator of a race—this saviour of organized democracy in the Western world—first heard the lullaby of love in a rude frontier cabin, and, with the earth of a common humanity still clinging upon him, went forth to the agonies of martyrdom and fame. And there upon the sacred mount of service and suffering—behold, he, too, was transfigured before the nations! All the dross and contaminations of early environment at length fell away and left this lowly man of the people standing lofty, and serene, and spotless in the white light of history; and when that murderous pistol-shot at last stilled his tired

heart and sped his weary soul to its reward, the sounds of bitter lamentation, coming in commingled strains alike from the palace and from the hovel, proclaimed but too truly that "our common manhood had lost a kinsman."